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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**June 23, 2006**

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### **FEDERAL AND STATE AGENTS TARGET INDIVIDUALS WHO DEFRAUDED THE CALIFORNIA EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS**

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that six additional defendants in three separate cases were indicted yesterday by a federal grand jury. In September 2005, ARMANDO LOPEZ, 23, FRANCISCO LOPEZ, 27, RAMIRO ROSAS, 30, FRANCISCO RAMOS, 28, RANFERI PENA, 22, MARIBEL RIOS, 34, all of Sanger, and HEIDI SMITH, 24, of Fresno, were indicted in a 128-count indictment with defrauding the Employment Development Department (EDD) of over a million dollars. Yesterday, the indictment was superseded to additionally charge JUAN ROSAS, JR., 25, of Sanger. All seven defendants have now been charged with conspiracy, mail fraud, identity theft, and aggravated identity theft. Each defendant faces a maximum of 20 years, and a two-year mandatory minimum sentence for the aggravated identity theft offense.

In a second indictment yesterday, JUAN GABRIEL PRIETO-ENRIQUEZ, 32, IGNACIO PRIETO-ENRIQUEZ, 29, JOSE GUADALUPE MOSQUEDA PRIETO-ENRIQUEZ, 25, and JOSE DUEL LOPEZ-LOMBERO, 29, all of Sanger, were charged with defrauding EDD in connection with fraudulent claims totaling approximately \$725,000. The defendants were indicted for conspiracy, mail fraud, identity theft, and aggravated identity theft. Each defendant faces a maximum of 20 years and a two-year mandatory minimum sentence for the aggravated identity theft offense.

In the third and final case, JOEL JAVIER LAMAS, 21, of Sanger, was indicted in an 18-count indictment with mail fraud, identity theft, and aggravated identity theft. He faces a maximum of 20 years and a two year mandatory minimum sentence for the aggravated identity theft charge.

These cases were a product of an extensive investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General and the EDD.

According to Assistant United States Attorneys Stanley A. Boone and Sheila K. Oberto, who are prosecuting the cases, the indictments charge the defendants with defrauding the EDD by filing thousands of false unemployment insurance claims with the EDD. According to the indictments, the defendants fraudulently acquired thousands of employees' identities, which

included names and social security numbers. Using that fraudulently acquired information, the defendants then filed false claims with the EDD, and had the fraudulent unemployment checks sent to numerous post office boxes and other addresses that they controlled.

In a separate case on Thursday, agents with the United States Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General and investigators with the EDD with assistance from the United States Postal Inspection Service and Reedley Police Department conducted search warrants at four separate locations in Reedley California. Arrested after these searches were GARY CARRASCO, 23, ERNEST ESCHEVESTE, 24, and JERRY LOPEZ, 23, all of Reedley who were charged with defrauding the EDD of unemployment insurance benefits.

The charges are only allegations and the defendants are presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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